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**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

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Landmark/District:	<b>Capitol Hill Historic District</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>1134 C Street, NE</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	<b>October 25, 2012</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	<b>12-608</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Amanda Molson</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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Owner and architect Lacy Brittingham requests concept approval for the addition of a third floor to 1134 C Street, NE in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

**Property Description**

Constructed in 1951, 1134 C Street, NE is a non-contributing building to the Capitol Hill Historic District, the period of significance for which extends through 1945. Situated at the corner of 12<sup>th</sup> and C Streets, NE, the house was originally constructed as a two-family flat with paired entry doors on the façade leading to apartments on each floor. The house includes a backyard extending along 12<sup>th</sup> Street, and it is landlocked at the rear.

**Proposal**

The applicant proposes to convert this two-family flat into a single-family residence by turning one of the entry doors into a window. A third floor, in the form of a mansard roof, would be added. The new height would be slightly above that of the contributing house next door at 1132 and roughly equivalent to that of the non-contributing house at 1130. The third floor would be clad in composite slate and would feature dormer windows on the front and side elevations. A simple cornice of dentil molding would be added below. On the 12<sup>th</sup> Street elevation, a projecting bay would be added towards the rear of the building.

**Evaluation**

As a non-contributing building to the Capitol Hill Historic District, the subject property does not add to our understanding of historically significant architectural qualities and development patterns in this neighborhood. As a result, the proposal should be evaluated for its general compatibility with the immediate context and with the character of the historic district, rather than its effect on character-defining features of the building or the potential to otherwise alter the appearance of a historic structure.

Considering the non-contributing status of this building, strategies of setting back the rooftop addition to preserve the original roof height and slope are generally not necessary. The Board has previously approved the construction of visible rooftop additions to non-contributing buildings, provided that the alterations are compatible with the streetscape and the general

character of the historic district. In the Capitol Hill Historic District, the Board has approved third stories that are flush with the front facades at 221 10<sup>th</sup> Street, SE (HPA #12-350) and 326 9<sup>th</sup> Street, SE (HPA #08-361), both of which were constructed in the 1960s. Additionally, the Board approved the addition of a third story in the form of a mansard roof at 1126 I Street, SE (HPA #10-263), a non-contributing house that was constructed in the 1970s. At 629 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE (HPA #12-028), the Board approved raising the height of an existing attic to accommodate a full second floor at a modestly-designed building that was constructed very late in the period of significance. At 524 8<sup>th</sup> Street SE (HPA #11-197), the Board approved a visible rooftop addition to the non-contributing portion of a historic commercial building on Barracks Row.

The proposed increase in height is compatible with the character of the streetscape. Houses along C Street and 12<sup>th</sup> Street include a variety of flat-front, porch-front, and bay-front facades and feature variations in height and roof form. Though situated on a corner, where one expects to see some sense of prominence through massing and/or detailing, 1134 C visually struggles to hold it own. The building sits at-grade while surrounding houses in this square sit slightly or considerably above-grade. Low ceilings, squatty windows, and a lack of decorative detailing contribute to the sense that the house would benefit from some added architectural interest and could contribute better to the overall streetscape as a result.

In considering alterations to non-contributing buildings, the Board has been mindful that these changes should be reasonably appropriate for the design of the subject property and should not result in a building that becomes a focal point of the overall streetscape. In assessing the design, this new addition would simply replicate the existing footprint of the house, creating a three-story house not unlike others constructed on Capitol Hill during the 1960s and 1970s. The inherited low ceiling height on the first and second floors have resulted in a house of a somewhat diminutive height, which could potentially be overwhelmed and subsumed by the height of a mansard roof generously scaled for living space. The applicant has mitigated this issue by keeping the ceiling height on the third floor just below that of the ground floors, and the mansard roof has the benefit of softening the overall massing impact and adding architectural detailing to an otherwise plain building. Working within the existing framework of the house to avoid the unnecessary reconfiguration of floor heights, this is a reasonable solution.

The new projecting bay facing 12<sup>th</sup> Street is perhaps scaled a little too wide for the depth of this house, but some flexibility is warranted considering the non-contributing nature of the property and the understandable desire to provide additional living space in rather small rooms.

The use of composite slate is appropriate in this case, in which a non-contributing building is receiving a new roof form. However, pliable composite slate products can easily exhibit poor craftsmanship during installation, as they are often cut along the bottom edge, thereby exposing a fibrous interior, or unconvincingly wrapped around corners. As the applicant consults with the contractor, she should be sure to specify that the slate product will be ordered at the appropriate size to avoid bottom cuts and that the corners will be treated as flashed edges.

As construction drawings are prepared, the applicant is encouraged to add some element of decorative detail around the main entry door, which is currently defined by a single course of

brick. This would better call attention to the main entry and would help bring the detailing of the new cornice down to the first floor. While not required (as it is an existing condition), the façade would benefit substantially from the reconfiguration of the windows on the second floor to include a third window opening, thereby creating a more pleasing alignment with the ground floor and reducing the expanse of masonry. This is an option that could be added if desired.

Considering the non-contributing nature of this building, the overall proposal is compatible with the character of the historic district. The proposal is consistent with the design of the subject house, with the character of the surrounding streetscape, and with the massing of other Capitol Hill buildings of this later generation.

**Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept to be consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff.*